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- k) a pair of ties each encircling a respective end ring, said ties being received in said loops.

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**REMARKS:**

The Examiner's comments in the outstanding Office Action have been carefully considered. Responsive thereto, proposed substitute drawing Figs. 5a, 6a, 7a and 7b are submitted with the legend "PRIOR ART" in red.

The claims have been amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim what Applicant regards as his invention.

More specifically, new independent claim 21 calls for the improvement of a sleeve assembly in combination with an air handling system of a heating, ventilating and air conditioning system, including a supply duct, a diffuser and a length of flexible duct interconnecting same. The duct includes an arcuate bend. The sleeve includes first and second ends, a passage extending therebetween for receiving the flexible duct, a frame generally conforming to the flexible duct exterior shape and including first and second frame sections, and a frame fastener for securing the first and second frame sections together with the duct in the passage.

The Godeau et al. patent, on the other hand, does not disclose the improvement of a flexible duct sleeve in the combination of an HVAC system. Rather, Godeau et al. is disclosed as being particularly suitable for mounting relatively large diameter ducts in motor vehicle engine compartments.

Elkins was cited for the interchangeability of sheet metal as an equivalent structure known in the art for plastic. However, Elkins does not show the other features of the Applicant's

invention as presently claimed.

New, independent Claim 22 comprises Claim 15 rewritten in independent form. Applicant sincerely appreciates the Examiner's indication that such would be allowable.

Applicant also sincerely appreciates the Examiner's indication that Claims 18-20 are allowed. Claim 18 has been amended to provide antecedent basis for the inner and outer radius frame sections.

In view of the foregoing, the Applicant respectfully submits that the application is in condition for allowance and notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. In the event that the Examiner is of the opinion that the prosecution of this application can be expedited thereby, he is invited to contact applicant's attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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By



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Certificate of Mailing

I hereby certify that this Amendment for Application Serial No. 09/498,783, filed February 5, 2000, is being *via Express Mail #EL 719577868US*, addressed to, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, BOX: FEE – AMENDMENT / RESPONSES, Washington, D.C. 20231 on June 21, 2001.

Dale J. Crook, Applicant

By Mark Brown  
Mark E. Brown, Attorney

(June 21, 2001)

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(Date of Signature)

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